

BASIS FOR THE AMENDMENT

The specification and claims have been amended to correct minor informalities as supported by the specification, drawings and claims as originally filed.

No new matter is believed to have been added by entry of this amendment. Entry and favorable reconsideration are respectfully requested.

Upon entry of this amendment Claims 1-36 will now be active in this application.

Claims 1, 3 and 15-36 stand withdrawn from consideration.

REMARKS

Applicants wish to thank Examiner Piziali for the helpful and courteous discussion with Applicants' Representative on October 18, 2006. The followinf is intended to expand upon the discussion with the Examiner.

During the discussion it was noted that the rejections of Claims 2 and 4-14 as being indefinite may be addressed by deleting "sheet-like" and inserting "in the form of a sheet" where appropriate.

Further, the present invention as set forth in **amended Claim 2** relates to a prepreg, comprising:

reinforcing fiber,

a reinforcing fiber substrate in the form of a sheet and containing reinforcing fiber,

and

a matrix resin,

wherein said matrix resin exists on both surfaces of said reinforcing fiber substrate, and a portion inside said reinforcing fiber substrate into which said matrix resin has not been impregnated is continuous.

For further understanding of the invention see for example Figure 3 which illustrates an embodiment of the present invention and compare to Figure 5. In Figure 3, the matrix resin non-impregnated layer 32 is formed as a continuous layer, while in Figure 5 there is a non-continuous non-impregnated layer. See also the discussion of these figures at page 16, starting at line 4 of the specification.

Further, the specification states at page 15, lines 11-18 as follows:

In a prepreg according to the second embodiment, the portion inside the sheet-like reinforcing fiber substrate into which the matrix resin has not been impregnated must be a continuous portion. In the second embodiment, this non-impregnated portion functions as the deaerating circuit, and the existence of this deaerating circuit means that the molded FRP can be formed without internal voids and surface pinholes. **However, if this deaerating circuit is segmented by the matrix resin, then the air**

that is enclosed by the matrix resin becomes extremely difficult to remove, and can give rise to internal voids and surface pinholes.

Regarding the prior art rejections, it was noted during the above mentioned discussion, that none of the cited references discloses a prepreg as claimed in which a portion inside the reinforcing fiber substrate into which the matrix resin has not been impregnated is **continuous**. While Xu et al (US 6,391,436) disclose partial impregnation of a fabric with a resin composition (col. 6, lines 41-63), this reference does not disclose an inside portion which has not been impregnated and is continuous. In fact, the liquid resin of Xu et al is likely to seep into the fabric thereby causing segmentation of any inside portion.

However, the present invention wants to avoid segmentation of the non-impregnated portion that can give rise to internal voids and surface pin holes. See page 15, lines 11-18 of the specification.

Hattori et al and Kishi et al do not cure the defects of Xu et al.

Moreover, a comparison between Examples 8 and 9 (according to the present invention, second embodiment as illustrated in Figure 3) and Comparative Examples 6 and 7 shows that if the resin migrates through the prepreg, a plurality of internal voids are observed in the central cross section of the panel (Comp. Ex. 6 and 7) while there are no voids in Examples 8 and 9.

These superior results are not disclosed or suggested by Xu et al, Hattori et al and Kishi et al.

Therefore, the rejection of the claims over Xu et al, Hattori et al and Kishi et al is believed to be unsustainable as the present invention is neither anticipated nor obvious and withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

The rejection of Claims 2 and 4-14 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, 2nd paragraph, is obviated the amendment of the claims.

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Reply to Office Action of August 21, 2006

The objection to the abstract is obviated by the new abstract. A copy of the new abstract has been provided on a separate sheet, attached herewith.

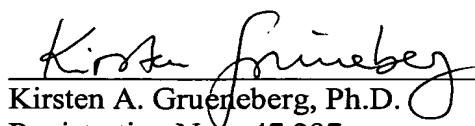
Finally, Applicants note that MPEP §821.04 states, "if applicant elects claims directed to the product, and a product claim is subsequently found allowable, withdrawn process claims which depend from or otherwise include all the limitations of the allowable product claim will be rejoined." Applicants respectfully submit that should the elected group be found allowable, the non-elected claims should be rejoined.

In addition, should the elected species be allowable, the Examiner should expand his search to the non-elected species.

This application presents allowable subject matter, and the Examiner is kindly requested to pass it to issue. Should the Examiner have any questions regarding the claims or otherwise wish to discuss this case, he is kindly invited to contact Applicants' below-signed representative, who would be happy to provide any assistance deemed necessary in speeding this application to allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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